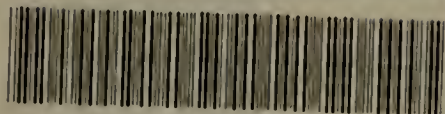


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COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

MASSACHUSETTS SENATE

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**JACQUES, HARSHBARGER, BIRMINGHAM, SLATTERY AND LAW  
ENFORCEMENT COMMUNITY SPEAK OUT IN SUPPORT OF ASSAULT  
WEAPONS BAN**

For Immediate Release:

Date: 9/11/97

Contact: Angus G. McQuilken (617) 722-1555 x1553

BOSTON, MA – State Senator Cheryl Jacques, Attorney General Scott

Harshbarger, Senate President Thomas Birmingham, Representative John Slattery, and representatives of the law enforcement community held a press conference today to speak out on behalf of legislation to ban assault weapons, laser sights and high capacity ammunition magazines, and toughen sentences for gun related crimes.

The press conference focused on the law enforcement community's call for passage of the Assault Weapons Ban in the wake of the recent murder of two New Hampshire state troopers, a judge and a newspaper publisher by an assault-weapon wielding assailant in New Hampshire several weeks ago. The legislation, Senate Bill #148, is on the Senate calendar for consideration at the next formal session.



On Tuesday, August 19<sup>th</sup> Carl Drega, a deranged gunman, used a Colt AR-15 Semiautomatic Assault Rifle, one of the weapons that is covered by the bill, to kill two State Troopers, a newspaper editor, and a judge, and wound four other law enforcement officers, one of whom is still hospitalized.. The rifle was purchased in Waltham, Massachusetts. Drega had four thirty-round magazines, sale of which would be banned by the bill. In addition to the AR-15, Drega used a pistol equipped with a laser sight in the killing of the two State Troopers. The sale or possession of laser sights would be banned by the bill.

Speakers at the press conference included Jacques, a former criminal prosecutor who is the Chief Senate Sponsor of the bill, Attorney General Scott Harshbarger, Representative John Slattery, a leading House co-sponsor of the bill, Boston Police Commissioner Paul Evans, Springfield Police Chief Paula Meara, representatives of the Boston Police Patrolmen's Association and the International Brotherhood of Police Officers, and John Rosenthal of Stop Handgun Violence.

"Military style assault weapons are, in the words of Jim Brady. designed for one purpose and one purpose only - to kill as many people as possible. as quickly as possible," said Jacques. "Assault Weapons keep showing up in the hands of cop killers and homicidal maniacs. Carl Drega illustrated this point quite clearly in New Hampshire last month. We cannot continue to allow our law enforcement officers to be outgunned by the criminals. This legislation presents a clear choice between the public interest, and the very narrow special interests of the N.R.A. It is a choice between the desire of law





enforcement officials to protect the public, and the desire of the N.R.A. to oppose any efforts to address the crisis of gun violence in America, no matter how reasonable or how narrowly defined. Polling has demonstrated that 84% of Massachusetts residents support this bill, and the results of the fall elections in Massachusetts have reinforced that fact. It is time to pass this vitally important crime control legislation."

"We should not wait until another crisis or tragedy before we act to ban assault weapons," said Harshbarger. "Banning these weapons from our neighborhoods should take nothing more complicated than common sense."

"We may very well have a long road ahead but it is my strong hope that it ultimately brings us to a responsible assault weapons ban," said Senate President Birmingham. Last year, he cast the deciding vote in the Senate to pass an assault weapons ban. This year, he will continue to work with Senator Jacques to fight for this basic public safety provision.

"We are proud of the progress we made last year with the statewide Assault Weapons Ban and continue to vehemently support this bill," said John Rosenthal, founder of Stop Handgun Violence, Inc. and NOT BULLETPROOF. "According to a statewide poll taken last spring, 84% of Massachusetts residents support this ban. They recognize that these guns are too dangerous to remain on the street: while assault weapons included in the ban account for less than one half of one percent of all guns they are used in 8% of crimes committed with guns. That is a statistic Massachusetts residents and politicians cannot ignore."





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**COMMENTS OF SENATOR CHERYL A. JACQUES**  
**SENATE #148 - AN ACT RELATIVE TO ASSAULT WEAPONS**  
**Law Enforcement Press Conference - September 11, 1997**

Good afternoon, and thank you all for coming. We are here today to join with the leadership of the Massachusetts law enforcement community to urge swift passage of Senate Bill #148, "An Act Relative to Assault Weapons".

I won't belabor the legislative history on this matter. As you know, this legislation passed both the House and Senate last year, and failed to reach the Governor's desk only due to the composition of the conference committee. This year we as a legislature have the opportunity to finish the job.

It was just three weeks ago that Carl Drega went on a murderous rampage in our neighboring state of New Hampshire. He used an AR-15 semiautomatic assault rifle, lawfully purchased in Waltham, Massachusetts, to kill two state troopers, a judge, and a newspaper editor. He had enough firepower left over to wound four other law enforcement officials, one of whom is still hospitalized. He had four thirty round banana clips, and a handgun with a laser sight. Assault weapons, high capacity ammunition magazines, and laser sights would all be banned under this legislation. If anybody still





needed to be convinced of why these weapons are so dangerous, particularly to police officers, the death of State Troopers Leslie Lord and Scott Phillips, along with the murders of Judge Vickie Bunnell and newspaper editor Dennis Joos, and the shooting of four additional law enforcement officers, should provide more than enough evidence.

Nine days after Carl Drega went on his murderous rampage, SWAT Team officer William Lowry of Tacoma Washington fell victim to another deranged gunman wielding an AK-47 assault rifle, with one other officer wounded.

The recent bank robbery in California, in which two heavily armed assailants with an arsenal of military-style assault weapons wounded eleven police officers who were significantly outgunned, demonstrated the extent to which our law enforcement officers are being placed at risk. A similar bank robbery attempt, with a similar arsenal of high powered assault weapons, occurred recently in St. Louis. That's why passage of this bill is vitally important to our law enforcement community. Just ask them, that is why they are here today. This legislation has been endorsed by every major law enforcement official in Massachusetts, including Attorney General Harshbarger, the Massachusetts District Attorney's Association, the State Police Association of Massachusetts, the International Brotherhood of Police Officers, the Massachusetts Coalition of Police, and the Boston Police Patrolmen's Association. It has been endorsed by Police Chiefs and Mayors from Boston's Mayor Menino and Police Commissioner Paul Evans to Springfield's Mayor Albano and Police Chief Paula Meara. Many of these individuals and groups are here today to tell you why this bill is so important.



A recent national study demonstrated that while assault weapons make up just 1% of guns in private hands in America, they represent 13% of the guns used to kill police officers. In other words, an assault weapon is far more likely to be used to kill a police officer than a conventional firearm. I hope to God that it does not take the death of a Massachusetts police officer before the legislature will pass this bill into law.

The Senate is scheduled to take this matter up for consideration at the next formal session. I am very pleased that I will enter that debate with such strong support from Senate President Tom Birmingham, and the law enforcement community.

Now I would like to call on Attorney General Scott Harshbarger, one of the leading advocates for Senate Bill #148.

(end)







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**Fact Sheet**  
**Senate Bill #148**  
**An Act Relative to Assault Weapons**  
**Filed by Senator Cheryl A. Jacques and**  
**Attorney General Scott Harshbarger**

This legislation would enact a state-wide ban on assault weapons, and would impose stricter sentences on criminals who traffick in guns or use a gun in the commission of a felony. The bill includes the following provisions:

- \* **A ban on the possession or sale of 25 enumerated military-style assault weapons** and any other gun which meets the definition of an assault weapon. The Secretary of Public Safety could add guns which meet the definition of an assault weapon to the list of prohibited guns.
- \* **A ban on the sale of high capacity ammunition magazines** which hold more than ten rounds, like those used in the Brookline health clinic murders.
- \* **A ban on the sale or possession of laser sights**, like that used in the shooting of a Boston Police Officer last year.
- \* **Stricter penalties for those who use a gun in the commission of a felony**, including a ten year minimum mandatory prison sentence. Current law provides for a three year minimum mandatory sentence.
- \* **A lifetime prohibition on the ability of convicted felons to obtain a gun license**. Current law only prohibits convicted felons from obtaining a gun license for five years from the completion of their sentence. Domestic abusers and others convicted of serious misdemeanors would face a new five year prohibition on gun ownership.

(more)



**\* Stricter penalties for trafficking in illegal arms by selling a gun to an unlicensed person, including a felony sentence of up to ten years in prison. Such an offense is currently considered a misdemeanor.**

**\* Tough penalties of up to ten years in prison for the sale of an assault weapon to a minor, including a minimum mandatory two years in state prison.**

**\* Stricter penalties for convicted felons who are found in illegal possession of a handgun, rifle, shotgun or assault weapon.**

**\* Penalties for gun owners who allow children to gain access to firearms through negligent storage.**





## **ASSAULT WEAPONS BAN QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

**What is the difference between the proposed bill and the federal ban on assault weapons?**

The federal assault weapons ban covered the manufacture or sale of 19 weapons by name, and a number of other weapons that meet the definition of an assault weapon. The state bill bans the sale or possession of 25 weapons by name, as well as copies of these guns, and other guns which meet the definition of an assault weapon. In addition, the federal bill bans only the manufacture of large capacity magazines, while the state bill bans the sale of large capacity ammunition magazines and ammunition belts. The state bill requires that the owners of any grandfathered assault weapon obtain a "license to possess an assault weapon". The federal bill included no licensing or record keeping requirements.

**What is the difference between an automatic and a semi-automatic weapon?**

An automatic weapon (machine gun) will continue to fire as long as the trigger is depressed or until the ammunition magazine is emptied. A semi-automatic weapon will fire one round and instantly load the next round with each pull of the trigger.

**Does the legislation ban all semi-automatic guns?**

No. Only military style semi-automatic rifles, pistols or shotguns with multiple assault weapon features will be banned. Traditional firearms which are designed for use in hunting and recreational activities are not affected.

**What are the characteristics of an assault weapon?**

The bill identifies 25 assault weapons by name, and also bans any gun which meets the definition of an assault weapon. This definition is based on the characteristics of the weapon. Some characteristics that could cause a gun to meet the definition include a folding stock, a pistol grip, a detachable magazine, a grenade launcher, a bayonet mount, a barrel shroud or a flash suppresser.

**What will happen to assault weapons lawfully possessed prior to the bill's effective date?**

Anyone with an assault weapon which was lawfully possessed prior to the bill's effective date is grandfathered and will not have to dispose of the weapon.

**Do law enforcement officials support this bill?**

Law enforcement organizations throughout Massachusetts including the Boston Police Patrolmen's Association, the International Brotherhood of Police Officers, the Massachusetts Coalition of Police, the State Police Association of Massachusetts and the Massachusetts District Attorney's Association have endorsed this bill. In so doing, they have joined with national associations such as the International Association of Police Chiefs and the National Association of Police Organizations, who support a ban on deadly military style assault weapons.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO  
DEPARTMENT OF CHEMISTRY

RESEARCH REPORT NO. 1000

BY  
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CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

RECEIVED  
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